

# RAINBOW CONNECTIONS

## ISSUE 2 | WHAT IS GRIEF?

We often ask the children in our groups to tell us what feelings they remember having in the first hour after the death of their loved one. They give us a long list. They say they felt in shock, numb, weird, sad, angry, confused, scared, guilty, and not believing it could be true. Some children also feel relieved, if the loved one was in pain and suffering before dying.

"THE FIRST HOUR AFTER HEARING ABOUT THE DEATH I WAS FEELING DENIAL, UNHAPPINESS, ANGER, SAD, UNCOMFORTABLE, UPSET, AND WEIRD ALL AT ONCE."

- Jessica, age 12

All of these feelings are called grief. Do you remember how you felt when you were told that your loved one had died? Maybe you felt some of the feelings that these kids in our group have felt or maybe you felt some different ones.

Your feelings are important. They can tell you something about what is going on inside and outside of you. They tell you who to trust, who to fear, who loves you. They can tell you

whether it's okay or not to share your grief with someone.

One thing we think all children should know is that there is no right or wrong way to feel after the death of someone we love. Each of us is different and each of us has his or her own way of feeling and grieving. Some of us cry a lot, some of us get very mad, some of us play a lot and only cry a little, some of us feel scared and our world feels kind of shaky. Besides grieving in different ways, we all grieve at a different pace. In a family, people are almost never grieving at the same time in the same way.



We are often asked "How long will my grief last?" We have no easy answer to this question. We do know it will change over time. It will become less intense. We know it will go away and come back sometimes at unexpected times, often at special times. For example, we may think of the person who has died when we are at a birthday party or when celebrating a holiday and feel some of the feelings of grief.

Often children find that it helps them to talk to someone about all the different feelings they are having. Talking with someone they trust helps them feel less alone and less sad. Asking for and giving hugs can also make people who are grieving feel better.

"It was really sad to see my mom in the hospital because she was in pain. It is scary that I have to go through life without a mom."

- Akisha, age 12

## ACTIVITY IDEA

### Memory Book

Draw a picture and/or write about how you felt when you heard that your loved one died. Share it with someone you love and keep it in your memory book if you would like to.



### Journal Writing

You might also want to start writing in a journal. A journal can be as simple as a spiral notebook that you keep just for yourself. A journal can be a good place to write about the feelings or thoughts that you might not be ready to share with anyone. Sometimes we will make suggestions of things to write in your journal. You can choose to share or you can choose not to share your journal.

## RECOMMENDED BOOKS

**Everett Anderson's Goodbye** by Lucille Clifton  
*A young African-American boy has a hard time with different feelings he has after father dies.*

**The Accident** by Carol Carrick  
*A realistic and moving story of a boy and his dog and how the boy deals with a wide range of emotions after his dog is killed in an accident.*

## SHARE HOW YOU ARE DOING!

Please call us if you would like to share your experiences with the feelings talked about in Rainbow Connections, or any other problems you might have. Kids are always teaching us about their grief and what helps them.



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